

Ash Wednesday: Reflection – Drawing aside for Lent ([Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21](#))

Lent gives us the chance of looking differently – at the world, at ourselves, our relationships with one another and with God.

In this time of Covid, we have become fastidious about hand-cleaning: sanitising, removing the invisible signs of dirt, needing to keep clean. Perhaps this Lent more than others, we have a strong sense of things being somehow tainted.

In the imposition of ashes which would have marked the start of our Lenten journey; marking, both physically and metaphorically, the minister says these words: “Remember that you are but dust, and to dust you shall return.

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.”

We are reminded of that mark of sin, the mark of our fallen, mortal selves. It is a painful and sobering moment.

But what if we looked at the mark differently?

God made us in his image, fearfully and wonderfully.

Yet, our sins, our failure to acknowledge the love of God and to follow the ways of Jesus, our lack of love for others, our disregard for our planet and the creatures with whom we share this earth put mucky marks over that image.

Yet, if we acknowledge where we have fallen short, and come back to God, something wonderful can happen.

God creates....

He is lifting off the dirt to show the beauty beneath.

That’s what happens as we draw aside and allow Christ to work in us.

The dirt, the ashy, dark smudges don’t disappear altogether, but rather become part of a more beautiful picture.

We see God’s love transforming us, taking our ashes and turning them into something beautiful.



God's Grandeur – Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

The Collect for Ash Wednesday

Holy God,
our lives are laid open before you:
rescue us from the chaos of sin
and through the death of your Son
bring us healing and make us whole
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Revd Vicky Barrett